**What is Culture?**

***“Culture, schmulture! People are basically the same around the world and I don’t need to know any ‘culture stuff’ as an American. They can learn my culture, right?” Wrong!*** --from the book Cultural Intelligence… by Brooks Peterson

Today we will explore the definition of “culture.” I will challenge your thoughts about culture and introduce you to a new way of thinking about it. Why is culture so important, you say? Before we take a look at what culture actually is, let’s see what YOU think it is! Read and complete this question before we meet together for a culture exercise. If you don’t know, do not write “I don’t know”--take a guess instead!

What is YOUR definition of “culture”? Write your definition below:

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An anthropologist is a scientist who specializes in study of the origin, the behavior, and the physical, social, and cultural development of humans. Here is one anthropologist’s definition of “culture”:

***“The sum total of ways of living, including behavioral norms, linguistic expression, styles of communication, patterns of thinking, and beliefs and values of a group large enough to be self sustaining, transmitted over the course of generations.”*** F. E. Jandt, 2001

**Now let’s explore what culture can look like in symbols.**

**(Tree) (OR) (iceberg)**

**Is Culture like a Tree or an Iceberg?**

Actually, culture can be like either one! Both analogies are accurate because there are aspects of culture that are very noticeable and aspects that are more difficult to perceive, almost hidden. Think of a tree: the trunk and the branches are **obvious**, but the roots of the tree are **hidden** from our view, under the ground. Although we can’t see them, we know they are there, because the visible tree can’t live without roots. Think of an iceberg: an iceberg does not float on top of the water, but there is much more beneath the surface; a mountain of ice. Only a small portion of the iceberg rises above the water where it is noticeable. The obvious portion of the iceberg would not be there if it weren’t for the supportive ice, hidden below it.

Culture is like both the tree and the iceberg. There are certain aspects of culture that are apparent and easy to spot (**you can see, touch, hear, taste and smell them),** but there are also aspects of culture that are much bigger and that run deep beneath the surface. These are the aspects of culture that are the most important for you to be aware of in your host country. These cultural differences can mean the difference between success and failure!

Now that you are aware of the two different types of culture, you will try two exercises one on your own and one with a partner.

**Exercise A: The Cultural Tree’s Attributes (with your teacher)**

**Concept of Justice, Music, Architecture, Concept of Beauty, Attitude Towards Elderly, Celebrations, Language, Gender Roles, Food, Humor, and Gestures**

Look at **The Culture Tree worksheet**. Your teacher will write 10 culture types on the board. As your teacher leads a class discussion of each one, write them either in the branches of the tree (culture that is experienced by the senses) or in the roots of the tree (culture not experienced by the senses). WORTH 10 COMPLETION POINTS!

**Exercise B: The United States Iceberg (with a group of 4)**

Now let’s try another exercise, this time with the Iceberg Analogy. You will be divided into small groups. With your group, look at the “Features of Culture” worksheet in your packet. Choose 15 of the 30 features and brainstorm some examples of that type of culture in the United States. Example: Movies: Wizard of Oz, Forest Gump These are movies that are classic American movies and show typical American culture.

Following the exercise, you will share answers with the class. WORTH 15 POINTS—must have good examples and participate in the discussion).

**For homework (due Tuesday—10points):**  You will take a second look at your answers on the “Features of Culture” worksheet. Looking at the “U.S. Iceberg” as a graphic organizer, you will decide where to put your fifteen answers--either in the “obvious” portion of the iceberg ABOVE the water’s surface or in the “hidden” portion of the iceberg, below the water’s surface. Keep in mind that the culture must be observable by your 5 senses to go ABOVE the water line. If the culture involves ideas, values, or concepts (how people think about things), they should go BELOW the water line.

Here’s an example of each: American’s participate in school sports (above the water line because we can SEE how many Americans play or watch sports) and we value freedom (below the water line because we can’t tell what people think or value with our senses).